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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## DECLARING FOR WAR

SIR,—If I am not mistaken, you were the first to declare outspokenly for war, at the annual dinner of the University Club at the New Willard Hotel in this city as long ago as February 14th, and your utterance, although evoking much applause that evening, brought sharp criticisms from various newspapers. Several members of this club who were present have expressed to me a wish that you would reprint that speech, as reported in the Washington newspapers, as a matter of both record and interest, in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. May I not hope that, in view of the fulfilment of the aspiration then voiced especially with respect to the proposed sending of an army to France, you will see your way to comply with this request?

JOHN W. CLIFTON.

University Club, Washington.

[Readily, though not pridefully, we comply. The chief gibe, incidentally, was the following from Mr. Bryan in the *Commoner* for March:

On another page will be found an extract from a speech delivered by Colonel Harvey at a dinner in Washington. It will be seen that he is in favor of getting into this war. The REAL motive back of most of the jingo crusade for big armies and navies is not to prevent war, but to bring on war. The Colonel says, "And glory openly and proudly in the present prospect of conflict which so many hold calamitous."

Colonel Harvey renders the general public a service in uncovering the motive which so many friends of war have been careful to conceal.

Perhaps it was not what the President calls a disservice after all. Anyhow this is what was said:

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 14TH, 1917.

Let us have no illusions with respect to what would happen if war should come. The impression seems to be quite general that our participation in the conflict would involve little more than what we are now doing. We would increase the output of munitions for both the Allies and ourselves. We would presumably lift the virtual embargo placed upon our financial resources by the Federal Reserve Board. We would continue to extend and perhaps expand our sympathy for those who are fighting to maintain individual liberty against the power of an overwhelming State.

We might even at a pinch send a few cruisers and even battleships down along the coast of South America, though hardly across the ocean. And that is about all, so far as the present consideration of our people has gone. Having performed these beneficent acts, we would await patiently and with full consciousness of our moral worth the actual winning of the war, with victory of course if need be, but without victory preferably, by the Allies.

Is not that substantially a correct statement of our prospective attitude? I believe that it is, and that the fact could be demonstrated, if time permitted, by a summing up of recent developments. We all know that enormous sums of money have been appropriated for feasible enlargement of the navy and for impracticable expansion of the army. But that has nothing to do with the present contingency. The navy is no more potent today than it was two years ago and the pathetic little army, scattered as at present, is not only less effective than it was four years ago, but it is forty per cent. short of its prescribed peace strength. Moreover, as you have noticed, the programme for its immediate strengthening has been curtailed to a hopeless degree upon the theory, officially declared, though not in these words, that the navy should have what might be termed first aid to the injured, and that this incapable nation can attend to but one arm of the service at a time. In a word, gentlemen, while we do not lack intelligence, we do refuse to learn. In this respect, incredible though it may seem, we are now demonstrating a maximum of stupidity surpassing that of the British themselves. Nobody knew better than they our distressing experience in raising armies in the Civil War. The frightful and almost fatal folly of our Government in forbidding enlistments at a time when recruiting was easy and popular, was as familiar to British historians, British statesmen, and even to the British people, as to ourselves. And yet they repeated that very performance within three months after the war broke out and only now, at the end of nearly three years, at appalling cost, and after making what is tantamount to conscription, not only of soldiers, but of old men and boys, and of women and girls in all walks of life, have they finally retrieved their fundamental error.

Now it requires no seer to perceive the absolute certainty that if we should, as we probably shall, be brought into armed conflict, we shall do precisely the same things, commit precisely the same blunders that we did commit nearly sixty years ago and that England has committed under our very eyes during the past three years, with only this difference—that in all human probability the penalties finally paid will be vastly heavier. Nothing could be more faultful or more fateful than this common misapprehension that our going to war would be a lackadaisical affair, that having once engaged in the controversy we could occupy reserved seats on the side lines and from that point of vantage plumply cheer on the bleeding gladiators without risk to our own precious selves. The most primitive sense of honor and of pride, to say nothing of the fear of shame and contumely would impel us instantly to prove our manhood and to do our bit. If, even in the distressed circumstances under which we now find ourselves, we should fail within six months to place at least one hundred thousand of the finest soldiers in the world shoulder to shoulder with the gallant sons of France, we would be known and deserve to be known as either the most inefficient or the most contemptible of hardy races. There

is always a psychological time to strike and that would be the time for us. Picture in your minds the thrill that would pass down that long, thin line stretching from Flanders to Switzerland, when word should come that the vanguard of the fighting sons of liberty and of free America were hastening eagerly forward over the soil of France, and that behind them in the great Republic a million more and back of them yet another million were being trained to take over the places of the exhausted soldiers of France, and to win for the children of these soldiers the inestimable benefit of imperishable freedom.

What would not any of you give to accompany that first body of our splendid regulars through the devastated fields of Normandy and wave response to the war-worn peasantry raising their faces and their voices in gratitude and hope? And what would you not give to hear from those brave lads of the trenches the first joyous "Vive l'Amerique" and hear the Tommies shout "Hear come the Americans!" Music such as that, my friends, springs only from on High to lift up the hearts of noble men who "their duties know but know their rights and knowing dare maintain." And what would such a scene signify if not the beginning of the end not only of the great war but of autocracy itself? For, mind you, when finally America joins hands with France and Britain and the three great democracies muster as a single force, as I pray they may, upon the battlefield of the worlds, all Heaven will ring with rejoicing; for God has said, I am tired of kings.

So I say to you gentlemen, if we must fight, as we always have fought, willingly, eagerly, gladly, for human liberty and human rights, let there be no paltering, no half-heartedness, no mere firing and falling back, but let all, yes all to the very last and feeblest of our omnipotent hundred millions, take their stand as one behind our chosen leader and mean it when we implore the Almighty to give us liberty or give us death. And let us hold nothing back from our allies who so long have borne the frightful burden of war for all. No special consideration! No mental reservations! No separate peace! None—upon this sole condition, that the infamous autocracy and the dastardly rulers who perpetrated this most hideous and awful of crimes shall be deprived forever of power over their own or any other people. If we are to fight successfully the battle of democracy, we must know that democracy, not sham but real, is going to win a complete triumph for all time and for all those whom fighting, we love and fight to free. Then with whole hearts and whole souls and all our might let us put the great shoulder of America to the wheel of war and crush out of existence with irresistible force any and all who would deprive God's children of their rightful heritage of inherent right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

This is the thing to do, the only thing to do. The time may come when we can utilize a League to Enforce Peace, but what we want now is a League to Enforce War, to the end that peace may come and come quickly. I know what war is. I know what this war is. With my own eyes I have seen the flower of their race streaming in thousands, wounded and dying, to those no less stricken at home. I hate war—even a righteous war. But I fear peace—a craven peace, a sinful peace. And I glory openly and proudly in the present prospect of conflict which so many hold calamitous. I revel in the hope that our great independent America may not be de-

prived of the privilege of doing her part in making and keeping the human race free from the menace of tyranny. Above and beyond all, God forbid that poltroonery in the guise of pacifism shall now or ever emerge from the cradle of liberty! And this be the battle-cry, the battle-cry of America!

Trumpeter, sound for the splendor of God!  
 Sound the music whose name is Law,  
 Whose service is perfect freedom still,  
 The order august that rules the stars!  
 Bid the anarchs of night withdraw,  
 Too long the destroyers have worked their will,  
 Sound for the last, the last of the wars!  
 When truth was truth and love was love  
 With a hell beneath and a heaven above,  
 Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us,  
 On to the City of God!

—EDITOR.]

#### ABOUT LINCOLN

SIR,—My suggestions as to the "Problems of a Peace League" published in your March number seem to have developed into a collateral issue as to whether or not Abraham Lincoln was an *idealist*, and, "in the beginning of his career," an *abolitionist*.

Although I was looking for enlightenment on the current theme of a Peace Tribunal, it may not be without profit, as it is never without interest, to consider any question concerning the Great Emancipator.

The majority of people, especially those of the younger generation, would probably say, at once, that Lincoln was an undoubted abolitionist from the time of his entrance into politics until the slave was free. It is, I think, the general impression; and quite naturally so, because of his issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, and because his first national prominence came from his debate with Stephen A. Douglas upon the slavery question. While that debate was, in a general sense, upon the question of slavery, it was in a more specific sense upon the *extension* of slavery. The question of its *abolishment* in the States in which it then existed did not arise in the discussion, for Lincoln himself did not advocate it, and Douglas did not find it necessary to oppose it. The several questions arising as to its *extension*, or, if you choose to put it conversely, its *restriction*, were the only ones discussed.

At different times in Mr. Lincoln's career he suggested gradual emancipation, with compensation, and, when he was a member of the Thirtieth Congress, introduced a bill for that purpose, applicable to the District of Columbia, one section of which provided for the extension of the Fugitive Slave Law so as to cover said District, which, through some oversight, had not been included in the original law. It was the recollection of this fact that caused Wendell Phillips, the greatest of the anti-slavery orators, on hearing of the nomination of Lincoln for the Presidency, to refer to him as the "Slave hound of Illinois."

Allen Thorndike Rice, former editor of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, in his introduction to the book which he compiled of "Reminiscences of Lincoln" (by distinguished and intimate contemporaries), says (page 44):